

The 102 Rejection Based on Uyama

Uyama describes a user-driven system for selectively retrieving information sought by a user and presenting it as a so-called virtual package display.¹ It is noted that the virtual package display is not described in Uyama as being personal to any consultant.² Applicant understands the specific question and answer function in Uyama to work as follows: the system forwards questions based on a keyword input from a user – 1) the user enters a keyword, 2) the system lists items (topics) related to that keyword, 3) the user chooses an item³, 4) the system maintains articles and the names of consultants associated with an item, and 5) the user can post a question related to the item where the system will route that question to the aforementioned consultants associated with that item.⁴

Thus, in Uyama, the keyword determines which consultants - from the pre-entered list - the system refers the question⁵. A keyword-based approach is dissimilar to having the user select the expert or having the expert help the selection process through the referral of questions.

In Uyama, an answer can be posted in the item-article list. However, since, in Uyama, questions are directed based on the topic, there is no way to post the answer to a question in multiple fora as in the claimed invention.

¹ (Uyama, col. 10, lns. 15-36), hereinafter all cites to Uyama unless otherwise noted.

² (col. 11, lns. 35-43)

³ (col. 11, lns. 50-65)

⁴ (col. 12, lns. 27-36)

⁵ See Figure 1, Referring/Updating Means (12), col. 12 lns. 11-15 and 33-36, and col. 2, lns. 7-11 and 56-63 – Note keyword is called “retrieval condition.”

⁶ (col. 3, lns. 17-20)

Applicants further note that posting the question in the item-article list, "for all to see", after an expert could not answer the question (See Examiner's argument as to claims 3, Office Action, page 5 citing Uyama, col. 2, ln. 54-67) does not anticipate the posting of the question in a location, "wherein each of said locations is accessible to only one expert of said set of experts" as recited in claims 40 and 88.

A second system described by Uyama is called OLC. OLC is essentially a customer service system for answering a question in real time by putting the question in a queue. OLC is built on a network services model of computation, designed for real-time connections between consultants and users.⁶ OLC automatically connects experts to the first user in a queue whose question topic matches the expert's declared specialties.⁷ The connection is one-on-one. Experts connect with live questioners in a queue, one at a time, excluding other experts, thus the pending question is not available to other experts during the connection.⁸ While experts have access to the "queue", experts interface with OLC is not described as being a personal interface.

Applicant respectfully submits that the claimed invention differs markedly from Uyama. None of the systems, nor any combination of the systems, discussed in Uyama teach or suggest displaying a question with other questions for an expert on a personal expert interface as in claims 1 and 49 of the present application. Advantageously, "collecting all of the experts questions in one place save the expert time and expense . . ." (Spec. p. 8, ln. 22 - pg. 9, ln. 2).

Additionally, none of the systems, nor any combination of the systems in Uyama, teach or suggest expert driven referral of questions and posting of answers at

⁶(col 3, ln. 29-33)

⁷(OLC: An On-Line Consulting System For Unix ("OLC"), §3.2.1)

⁸(OLC §3.2.1)

substantially the same time as in claims 7, 55, and 99-102. This expert driven focus and flexibility provides the ability for peer review. (Spec. p. 10, ln. 4-15)

Moreover, none of the systems, nor any combination of the systems discussed in Uyama, teach or suggest the availability of all questions posted on one or more topics to each one of a set of experts, nor does it teach or suggest executing a command from one of those experts as in claims 40 and 88. (Spec. p. 10, ln. 16-21) As noted in the specification, "collecting all of the experts questions in one place save the expert time and expense . . ." (Spec. p. 8, ln. 22 - pg. 9, ln. 2)

Also, none of the systems, nor any combination of the systems in Uyama, teach or suggest posting an answer in a plurality of fora as in new claims 97 and 98 (Spec. p. 10, ln. 4-6) allowing the user to view answers to questions from other fora that are nonetheless pertinent to that user.

Thus, for at least the reasons given above, applicants respectfully submit claims 1, 40, 49, and 88 are neither anticipated, nor rendered obvious by Uyama.

Applicants further submit that claims 2-7, 43-46, 50-55, and 91-94 are likewise not anticipated nor rendered obvious by Uyama based on their respective dependence from claims 1, 40, 49 and 88 and their own further limitations, and should, therefore, be allowed.

The 103 Rejection based on the Combination of Uyama and Walker

Claims 8, 9, 47, 48, 56, 57, 95 and 96 each depend respectively upon one of claims 1, 40, 49 and 88. Based at least upon the above-described amendments to independent claims 1, 40, 49 and 88, applicants respectfully submit that the

combination of Uyama and Walker fails to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness

insofar as neither reference teaches the limitations of the independent claims.

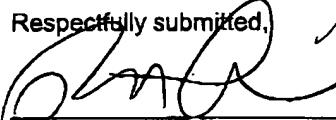
Accordingly, applicants submit that claims 8, 9, 47, 48, 56, 57, 95 and 96 are allowable over the combination of Uyama and Walker.

Applicants submit that new claims 97-102 should be allowed for at least the reasons discussed above.

All pertinent points in the Office Action dated October 18, 2001 have been addressed on the basis of the above amendment and remarks. Reconsideration of the rejections is respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner believe that direct contact with Applicant's attorney would advance prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

Dated: April 18, 2002

Respectfully submitted,

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PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of: James D. MARKS, ET. AL.

Serial No.: 09/447,259 Art Unit: 2771

Filed: November 23, 1999 Examiner: D. ROBERTSON

For: INTERACTIVE SYSTEM FOR MANAGING QUESTIONS AND
ANSWERS AMONG USERS AND EXPERTS

MARK-UP FOR AMENDMENT OF April 18, 2002
PURSUANT TO 37 C.F.R. §1.121

Hon. Commissioner of
Patents and Trademarks
Washington, DC 20231

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Sir:

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IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Amended) A method, executed by a server, for providing answers on one or more topics from a set of experts on each topic to questions posed by users in communication

RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION DATED OCTOBER 18, 2001
SERIAL NO. 09/447,259

with client interfaces, the server being in communication with the client interfaces and the set of experts, and the method comprising:

receiving at the server a question received from a user via one of the client interfaces;

routing the question to one of the experts [selected using information provided with the question] by the user, wherein said routing the question comprises displaying the question with other questions for said one of the experts on the personal expert interface of said one of the experts;

receiving a command from the selected expert in response to the question; and
executing the command from the selected expert automatically.

7. (Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein receiving a command includes receiving a command to post an answer to the question and refer the question another one of the experts at substantially the same time.

40. (Amended) A method for providing answers on one or more topics from a set of experts on each topic to questions posed by users via client interfaces in communication with a server and with the set of experts, the method comprising:

receiving at one of the client interfaces a question on the selected topic;
transmitting the question from the client interface to the server;
routing the question to [one of the] a plurality of experts [using information provided with the questions] by posting the question in plurality of locations, wherein each of said locations is accessible to only one expert of said set of experts;

receiving a command at the server from [the selected] an expert in response to the question; and

executing the command from the [selected] expert automatically.

55. (Amended) The system of claim 49 wherein the command receiving component further comprises an answer-and-refer command receiving component configured to

RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION DATED OCTOBER 18, 2001
SERIAL NO. 09/447,259

receive a command to post an answer to the question and refer the question to another one of said experts at substantially the same time.

49. (Amended) A server for providing answers on one or more topics from a set of experts on each topic to questions posed by users in communication with client interfaces, the server being in communication with the client interfaces and the set of experts and comprising:

a question receiving component configured to receive at the server a question received from a user via one of the client interfaces;

a routing component configured to route the question to one of the experts selected [using information provided with the question] by the user, wherein said routing component is further configured to display the question with other questions for said one of the experts on the personal expert interface of said one of the experts;

a command receiving component configured to receive a command from the selected expert in response to the question; and

an executing component configured to execute the command from the selected expert automatically.

55. (Amended) The system of claim 49 wherein the command receiving component further comprises an answer-and-refer command receiving component configured to receive a command to post an answer to the question and refer the question to another one of said experts at substantially the same time.

88. (Amended) A system for providing answers on one or more topics from a set of experts on each topic to questions posed by users via client interfaces in communication with the server, the server comprising:

a question receiving component configured to receive at one of the client interfaces
a question on the selected topic;

a transmitting component configured to transmit the question from the client interface
to the server;

a routing component configured to route the question to [one of a plurality] said set
of experts [selected using information provided with the questions] by posting the question
in plurality of locations, wherein each of said locations is accessible to only one expert of
said set of experts;

a command receiving component configured to receive a command at the server
from one of the [selected] experts in response to the question; and

an executing component configured to execute the command from the selected
expert automatically.

97. (New) A method, executed by a server, for providing answers on one or more topics
from a set of experts on each topic to questions posed by users in communication with
client interfaces to a plurality of fora, the server being in communication with the client
interfaces and the set of experts, and the method comprising:

receiving at the server a question received from a user via one of the client
interfaces;

routing the question to one of the experts selected using information provided with
the question, wherein said routing component is further configured to display the question
on the personal expert interface of said one of the experts;

receiving a command from the selected expert in response to the question, wherein
said command comprises a command to post an answer to the question selectively in at
least one of a plurality of fora; and

executing a command from the selected expert automatically.

98. (New) A server for providing answers on one or more topics from a set of experts on each topic to questions posed by users in communication with client interfaces to a plurality of fora, the server being in communication with the client interfaces and the set of experts and comprising:

a question receiving component configured to receive at the server a question received from a user via one of the client interfaces;

a routing component configured to route the question to one of the experts selected using information provided with the question, wherein said routing component is further configured to display the question on the personal expert interface of said one of the experts;

a forum component configured to receive answers posted by said set of experts, wherein said forum component comprises a plurality of fora;

a command receiving component configured to receive a command from the selected expert in response to the question, wherein said command receiving component further comprises a post in at least one of plurality of fora command receiving component configured to receive a command to post an answer to the question in at least one of a plurality of fora; and

an executing component configured to execute the command from the selected expert automatically.

99. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein receiving a command includes receiving a command to post an answer to the question and refer the question to another one of the experts at substantially the same time.

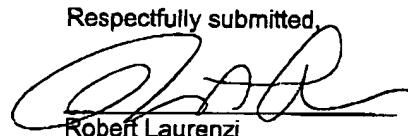
100. (New) The method of claim 40 wherein receiving a command includes receiving a command to post an answer to the question and refer the question to another one of the experts at substantially the same time.

101. (New) The system of claim 49 wherein the command receiving component further comprises an answer-and-refer command receiving component configured to receive a command to post an answer to the question and refer the question to another one of said experts at substantially the same time.

102. (New) The system of claim 88 wherein the command receiving component further comprises an answer-and-refer command receiving component configured to receive a command to post an answer to the question and refer the question to another one of said experts at substantially the same time.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: April 18, 2002



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RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION DATED OCTOBER 18, 2001
SERIAL NO. 09/447,259

PAGE 6